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SUBJECT: BURKINA FASO: UPDATE OF PEACE KEEPING BATTALION READINESS

REF: OUAGADOUGOU 962; KHARTOUM 001726

I1. The following summarizes the status of the first of three ACOTA-trained Burkina Faso infantry battalions scheduled to participate in UNAMID peace support operations.

IA. Equipment: All ACOTA- and SPG-funded and procured equipment has been received except: 1 battalion aid station, 15 pistol belts with suspenders, 1 rough terrain forklift, 1 low-bed trailer, 800 combat helmets, 800 bullet proof vests, 4 armored personnel carriers for training, 26 armored personnel carriers to be deployed with the battalion; also communications equipment, including: 10 VHF base stations, 4 VHF repeater stations, 41 VHF transceivers for vehicles, and 10 HF base stations. The battalion aid station and pistol belts with suspenders are scheduled to arrive in early January, 2009, the rough terrain forklift and low-bed trailer are scheduled to arrive on 20 December, the combat helmets and bullet proof vests, the 4 training and 26 armored personnel carriers to be deployed are scheduled to arrive on December 18, 2008 and early January, 2009 respectively, and the communications equipment is scheduled to arrive on December 30 (with the exception of the VHF base station, which does not yet have a delivery date). Based on the most recent UNDPKO UNAMID Infantry Battalion major equipment requirement list, the BF battalion has on hand all required equipment (except that mentioned above). All equipment on hand has been painted white according to UNDPKO specifications. Post understands that the APCs are being painted at the factory.

IB. Training completed: In October and November, 2008, ACOTA provided the following additional training to the battalion scheduled to deploy first: 1) New Equipment Training; 2) Pre-Deployment and Staff training; and 3) Combat Engineer Training.

IC. Training scheduled: ACOTA has scheduled the following training in January-February 2009: 1) peace support operations for a mechanized company January 12-23; 2) peace support operations inventory training on February 3-6; 4) Field Medic training on February 9-20; 5) PSO Pre-deployment PSSOST Refresher training (original training was done in 2007) February 23-March 13; 6) Pre-deployment staff refresher training February 9-27; and 7) deployment mentoring March 16-20, 2009. The Ministry of Defense (MOD) has agreed in principle to the training listed above, but notes that the dates may need to change because their equipment will need to be ready to deploy on February 9, the projected material readiness date. The MOD has informally told Post that all training that uses equipment should be completed by this date. Furthermore, PAE has scheduled new equipment training for all major PAE-provided equipment, including vehicles, communications, water treatment, and one battalion aid station. This training will be conducted December 18, 2008-January 22, 2009.

ID. Ongoing training: Thirty section chiefs from the battalion were enrolled in English at the MOD (IMET-funded) English teaching laboratory from August-October, 2008 for intensive training. English will be reinforced for the section chiefs at each regrouping, during pre-deployment planning, and for a three-week intensive course in January, 2009.

IE. Preparation for deployment: Two contractor experts spent five

weeks with the Burkinabe battalion and MOD staff assisting them with deployment planning and providing other training, including combat engineering. ACOTA has proposed a trainer for January to focus on ensuring accurate load list and cargo readiness date submissions for the contingency owned equipment. Post understands that the UNDPKO has sent a UN logistics contractor to assist with the same tasks. The UN contractor will return to Burkina Faso to assist with pre-deployment tasks in February. Post strongly supports this joint effort.

-The MOD has informed the Embassy that its load list will be complete on January 5, 2009 pending information from the U.S. on remaining delivery dates and on the procurement of additional equipment not originally identified as a UNDPKO requirement or identified by MOD as being a need but not a DPKO requirement. The MOD has agreed to seek clarification from UNDPKO on any changes in equipment requirements and Post will discuss the results with SPG and ACOTA.

-The MOD has requested from ACOTA and PAE a complete list of donated equipment with the unit price of each item and its delivery date (both past and future dates). Post understands the unit price is required for the load list. The MOD would like to have the above information by December 26, 2008, to help it complete its load list by January 5, 2009. Post has forwarded this request for information to both PAE and ACOTA.

-Post understands that the UN has scheduled a pre-deployment visit for 9-13 February and that the cargo readiness date will be 24 February. The MOD told Post that the MOU with DPKO is in negotiation and that it hopes to sign the final document soon after the UN completes its pre-deployment inspection.

-Embassy staff has carefully reviewed with Burkina Faso MOD staff the DPKO Infantry Battalion requirements (para. 4 of the document entitled UNAMID Infantry Battalion) and has the following concern: MOD staff believes there may have been changes to the original UNDPKO requirements list. To address this concern, Embassy staff has asked the MOD to coordinate with the military attache posted to the Burkinabe Mission to the UN. (See details in para. 2.C. below). Despite these difficulties, they appear to be well prepared to carry out all of the other requirements.

I2. The Ministry of Defense made several additional requests on October 7, as reported in reftel. The status of those requests is as follows:

IA. Approximately 2.5 million dollars to build a camp in Darfur. After consultation with AF/RSA, ACOTA, and USUN, the Ambassador informed the Minister of Defense that material will be provided by the UN and the battalion will provide the labor. She pointed out that ACOTA had recently trained the engineer company to perform basic combat engineering, which includes setting up a base camp until a more permanent camp and infrastructure is provided.

IB. Funding for per diem of battalion staff while training and awaiting deployment: After consultation with AF/RSA/ACOTA, Ambassador informed the MOD that ACOTA would try to fund per diem only for those who were undergoing ACOTA-training during the pre-deployment phase.

IC. Funding for additional equipment: the MOD identified 1 sewage truck, 2 layered tents with air conditioners and washing facilities, and 1 medium cargo trailer as being items they hope to have but that are not on the UNDPKO requirements list. Concerning these items, MOD staff said they believe the UNDPKO requirements have changed, but they agreed to confirm this with UNDPKO directly. (See para 1.E. above).

-In addition to these items, the MOD has asked for the following equipment that is on the UNDPKO UNAMID Infantry Battalion requirements list but numbers are not specified in that document: 63 fans or air conditioners to go with the tents (the UN list says that tents must have cooling systems but does not specify what kind), 5 laptop computers, 7 desktop computers, 3 photocopiers, 2 fax machines, 6 printers, and 6 scanners (this is in addition to office equipment that was already purchased by ACOTA for training purposes).

-The Ambassador intends to inform the Minister of Defense in writing that the U.S. will not purchase any further equipment or offer any additional financial assistance prior to Burkina Faso's first deployment except for per diem costs associated with remaining ACOTA pre-deployment training.

¶3. Embassy Ouagadougou stands ready to assist any and all efforts to ensure the battalion is deployed to Darfur as soon as possible.

JACKSON